

# Sharing the "giving" in Thanksgiving holiday

No, no, no. "Tie One On Day," officially marked on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, is not about the cook imbibing while working away in the kitchen, dutifully roasting a big bird stuffed with stale bread. Rather, it's about all celebrants sharing warm thoughts and homemade treats with those who might benefit from a little bit of encouragement. Best of all, this care package is wrapped up in an apron (ideally, a vintage one).

Feeling warm and fuzzy yet?

For EllynAnne Geisel, the idea of inventing a new holiday, one marked on the eve of a tradition-laden official holiday, came quite by accident. I caught up



"Tie One On Day" is one apron enthusiast's way to put the "giving" back into Thanksgiving.

## INSIGHTS

BARBARA MILLER BEEM

with her a few weeks ago, and we spent a wonderful academic hour (that being 50 minutes) on the phone. During our conversation, she told me the story of how she is seeking to put the "giving" back in "Thanksgiving."

Thirteen years ago, this Pueblo, Colo., resident found herself caught up in typical Thanksgiving preparations: cleaning the house, setting the table, and, yes, cooking and baking. In the midst of it all, her thoughts drifted back to her mother, who, as she remembered, "always made room for one more at the table." Meanwhile, on this afternoon in November 2005, Geisel was striving to deliver what she called "the perfect meal and the perfect holiday."

A tall order, to be sure.

Geisel conceded, "I've never had a perfect anything in my life. This all seemed at odds with my Mom's approach." And so, in a spontaneous gesture, Geisel

placed home-baked treats in a kitchen towel, along with a handwritten note, and headed to her neighbor's house. "I was so nervous," she recalled. "I still had my apron on. I rang the bell and hoped that there would be no answer so that I could just drop the gift and run, but that didn't happen."

Instead, her neighbor, whose family had been going through a rough patch, opened the door. Geisel said she will never forget the look on the recipient's face. "Looking back, it still fills my heart with joy. I was astonished that I felt so good for just doing the right thing."

Then and there, Geisel decided that "next year would be different." And so, in 2006 (the same year in which her book, *The Apron Book: Making, Wearing, and Sharing a Bit of Cloth and Comfort*, was



**Above:** A gift of home-baked goodies, a note of encouragement and a vintage apron.

published), she began her very own national holiday. In the midst of a multi-day extravaganza that includes football games and over-the-top feasts, leftovers and midnight shopping, "Tie One On Day" was born.

SEE INSIGHTS - GEISEL ON PAGE 4

# The well orchestrated dance of Thanksgiving

## INSIGHTS

DEBORAH THREADGILL

I, like a lot of other people, have fond memories of Thanksgiving dinners spent with family. Having grown up in a small agricultural town in California everyone knew their neighbors and family members were never far away. The house that I grew up in was built by my grandfather for my mother and my grandparents lived at the end of the street.

Mom's two sisters and their families lived the next street over as did her brother and his family. Every other year Mom's two other sisters and their families who lived in the "big city" of Los Angeles would join in the celebration. The old homestead was full to the brim with moms, dads and kids.

All of us would converge at my grandparents' house early Thanksgiving morning. The adult women headed for the kitchen while the adult men headed for the den. All the kids went straight to the playroom/office where a large trunk held all sorts of treasures — dime store jewelry, clothes, hats, gloves, shoes, feather boas, sparkling tiaras — one

never knew what one would find which made it all the more fun. It was here that we kids planned out our Thanksgiving Day "play" to be performed after dinner for the entertainment of the adults. Everyone vied for the role of director and it usually ended up going to the kid who won the most votes for the best idea.

The kitchen buzzed with activity. Grandma, mom and aunts set about peeling potatoes, chopping celery and onion for the stuffing, polishing the silver, getting the good china out, baking pies....oh my, the pies. Pumpkin, apple, cherry, pecan — all with a perfect flaky crust. Try as I might, even to this day I can't turn out a pie crust that even comes close. There was a certain rhythm to their activities. Like a well rehearsed and choreographed cooking "dance" they wove around each other, ducked when hot foods came out of the oven and a figure eight pattern from sink to stove

to countertops played across the floor as each went about their tasks without skipping a beat, able to carry on the conversation uninterrupted yet somehow never bumping into each other in the small kitchen.

The men huddled in the den smoking cigars while discussing events of the day or watching some sporting event on T.V. seemingly unaware of what was going on in the kitchen. Never did they stray from the confines of the den until dinner was ready and then it was Grandpa who led the procession out, making his way to where ol' Tom rested on the sterling platter and made a great show



of carving the turkey with a knife that had carved many a turkey over the years. Grandma and Grandpa filled their plates first, followed by everyone else. Once their plates

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## COLLECTING CLASSICS

BY JOHN STINGER



# AntiqueWeek

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## Bowie

FROM PAGE 2

period, and traditional antiques along with colonial-inspired custom cabinetry. Their wares have been featured in periodicals like Country Home, Country Living, and Early American Life. Sadly, this building which once housed multiple dealers is also up for sale and the company is closing its doors soon.

While in town, visitors can also shop the Pink Orchid florist and gift shop, visit the train museum, or browse the historic items in the City's welcome center housed in the former tax assessor's office. For a quick bite, there's the Old Bowie Town Grill and Old Town Deli sandwich shop.

Beyond shopping, Bowie offers day trippers some impressive historic sites. A starting point is the Belair Mansion, a Georgian-Federal manor built in 1745 on a tobacco plantation



owned by two colonial governors, Samuel Ogle, and Benjamin Tasker. The Belair Stable Museum showcases Bowie's 19th-century legacy as the "cradle of American thoroughbred racing" when the Belair estate bred some of the finest racehorses in the country. Nearby Bowie Racetrack helped train them.

Visitors can also explore the iconic Levittown neighborhoods for which Bowie is most recognized. Levitt developed the 4,500-home planned community on the Belair Farm during the 1950s and 1960s from offices in the Belair Mansion. The area has the distinction of being celebrity Kathy Lee Gifford's home through most of her school days.

Bowie is also the home of the National Capital Radio and Television Museum. The museum, which is about to celebrate its twentieth anniversary, is located in a 1906 storekeeper's house and displays everything from antique radios to the earliest televisions.

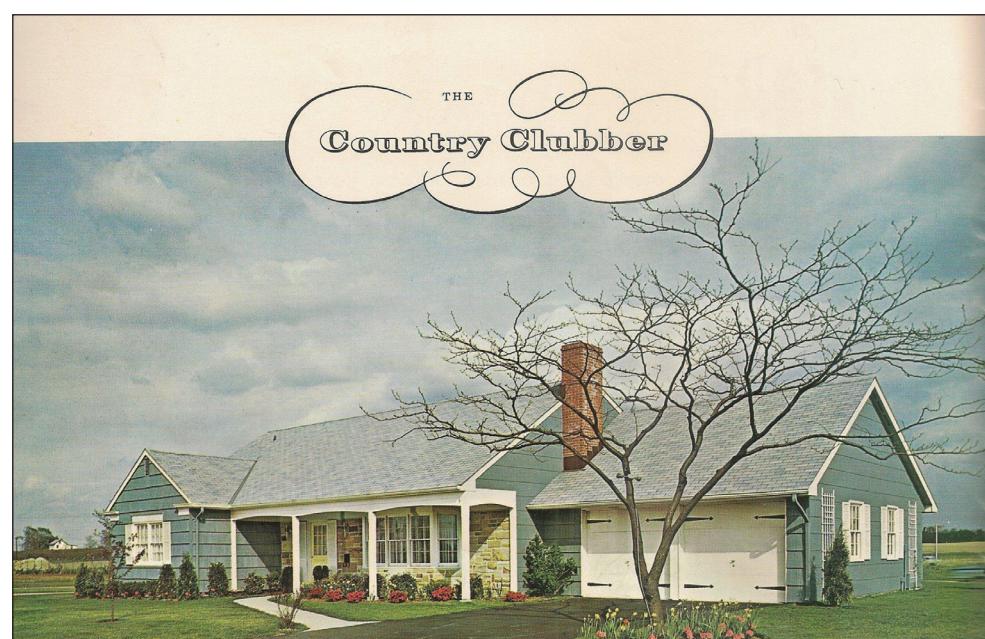
Despite its historic appeal and millions invested into streetcapping and enhancements, Old Bowie shopkeepers are struggling as onetime throngs of weekend shoppers have become a trickle. Priorities may be to blame as the city focuses on commercial growth at Bowie's outskirts. Festivals once held in Old Town that drew thousands have now been shifted to other areas of the community. Promotional efforts, like the "Shops of Old Bowie" website have gone largely silent. Shop owners, and purportedly the city, want to further the historic district as a retail destination. With prudence, antique shopping will remain part of Old Bowie's draw for another half-century.

**Left:** Railroad control room at the Bowie Railroad Museum



**Above:** Keller's Antiques

**Below:** Advertisement for Levitt houses built at Belair



## Insights - Geisel

FROM PAGE 3

The message is simple. Reach out to someone: Bake something tasty in your own kitchen and write a heartfelt message (do not type, do not text, and do not email). And then, in place of traditional gift wrapping, gather it all up in an apron. Why an apron? Well, Geisel, a longtime collector, identifies herself as an author, blogger, and speaker; her topic is aprons, which she has been known to call "domestic armor." Not only does Geisel collect aprons, she also collects the stories behind them. "Within the fabric of an apron is the spirit of a woman," she believes, and she sees an apron as "a symbol for domesticity and the heart of the home." What better fit for Thanksgiving, a time for gratitude

and giving, food and family?

Even though this new holiday has had humble beginnings, it is catching on. For Geisel's part, she has come to the realization that she will never ever be able to wear the multi-hundreds of aprons that she has amassed, and she's working on ways to give them away – in a meaningful manner – during the holiday season, as well as spread a message of hope. This is, of course, a lovely gesture, but I'm thinking that sharing a vintage apron with someone might be a creative way to spark a new generation of collectors.

For Geisel, however, there is a greater message, one of looking back and looking forward at the same time. She concluded, "Generations and generations of women have tied one on as they have gone about the business of running the farm and raising the family."



**Above:** Original DC Little Tavern Restaurant Sign

**Below:** Old Bowie, circa 1960's (photo: Bladensburg High School Class of 1959)



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